

Berkshire County
 **Head
Start**



ANNUAL REPORT • 2021 - 2022



Our Mission

To enhance opportunities for success by inspiring each child's love of learning, partnering with families, advocating for equity and fostering a connection to community.

About our Program

Berkshire County Head Start (BCHS) was established in 1976. It is an early childhood program providing education, health and comprehensive services to children and their families. We serve all of Berkshire County with sites in Great Barrington, Pittsfield and North Adams. Our programs are rated according to the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and we strive for excellence in all categories.

BCHS promotes the school readiness of preschool-aged children from families that are income eligible. BCHS also engages parents, guardians and other present family members in positive relationships, with a focus on family well-being. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to take a leadership role in their student's education, including BCHS's operations through our Policy Council (to review, go to: (<https://berkhs.org/policy-council>))

BCHS supports children's growth in a positive learning environment through a variety of services, which include:

1. EARLY LEARNING and DEVELOPMENT: Children's readiness for school and beyond is fostered through individualized learning experiences. Through interactions with adults, playing with peers and planned and spontaneous instruction, children in this program develop socially and emotionally, and gain skills in language and literacy, mathematics and science. Early learning experiences also include the cultural and language heritage of each child and family in relevant ways. Parents, grandparents, foster parents, and other primary caregivers, are recognized as a child's first and most influential teachers. The knowledge that they have of their child is central to BCHS's individualized approach to successfully supporting that child. Additionally, BCHS works with families, school districts and other entities to facilitate each child's smooth transition to kindergarten.

2. HEALTH: Healthy minds and bodies are crucial for early learning activities that require children to fully explore and experience their environment. BCHS provides safe and healthy learning opportunities indoors and outdoors. All children receive health screenings and nutritious meals, and our programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services to ensure children are receiving the care and attention they need. Support services exist, and are utilized, for building resiliency to cope with possible adverse effects of trauma and managing and/or overcoming mental health struggles.

3. FAMILY WELL-BEING: Parents and families are offered program services to support family well being and to achieve family goals, such as housing stability, continued education and financial security. BCHS's programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families in the learning and development of their child.



Our Values

Integrity and Openness

We commit to providing structured, consistent time with individuals and teams. We agree that our conversations will be transparent and open to feedback from all levels. We commit to this value to ensure continuous open communication and to ensure the highest level of service to each other and families.

Enthusiasm and Engagement

We commit to talking often about BCHS's vision ("the big picture"), its mission and the positive impact it has on families. We commit to ensuring that the program's performance expectations, budget, processes and policies are communicated often. We agree to clearly articulate plans, follow through on them and communicate changes as they occur, including why changes were made. We commit to this value to ensure that everyone is on the same page and understands how they contribute to BCHS's success.

Teambuilding and Respect

We commit to supporting and respecting each other, ensuring strong cooperation among team members. We'll reflect this value by listening and considering other's opinions, feelings, and core beliefs in all interactions and communications and by our ability to work through strong emotions and come to mutually agreeable and beneficial solutions. We agree to ask for, offer and accept help when it's needed. We commit to this value to ensure that the combined talents, experience, skills and education of all team members are recognized and supported.

Reliability and Accountability

We commit to demonstrating reliability by being on time, available and by taking the initiative to pitch in when and where needed. We will take responsibility for individual commitments, work and interactions by following through, accepting consequences and learning from our mistakes. We understand the results of consistently demonstrating reliability and accountability are strong, trusting relationships with parents, children, co-workers and the community.

Locations

Head Start at Meadow Lane

1 Meadow Lane
Pittsfield, MA 01201
413-499-0137

Head Start at Conte

200 W Union St
Pittsfield, MA 01201
413-496-9494

Head Start at North County

535 Curran Highway
North Adams, MA 01247
413-499-0137

Head Start at Taconic

96 Valentine Road
Pittsfield, MA 01201
413-448-9600 ext. 1172

Head Start at Brayton

20 Barbour Street
North Adams, MA 01247
413-664-0384

Head Start at Muddy Brook

318 Monument Valley Road
Great Barrington, MA 01230
413-644-0005



Executive Director Message



Brett Westbrook
Executive Director

At Berkshire County Head Start (BCHS), community is very powerful. Our community partners, teachers, teaching assistants, home visitors, family advocates and program administrators help us assess the needs of every family and build the academic and social foundations for every child that comes into our care. We are dedicated to their growth and future success, because they are the next generation. For that reason, we are continuously strengthening our programs through valuable partnerships.

BCHS acts as a lifeline for families, providing the resources essential for bridging the gap in school readiness, as well as addressing each child's emotional, social, health, nutritional, educational and psychological needs. We begin by examining the entire family's current situation and administering programs that help individuals support their children's early education. In our multi-generational approach, we partner with families to find effective methods to address challenges to help them transition to achieving self-sufficiency.

This past year, our parents, community and staff have continued to demonstrated flexibility, resiliency and commitment in the face of overwhelming challenges related to the pandemic. While none of us could have anticipated the circumstances with which we were forced to adjust, we are very proud of what everyone has accomplished by working together.

BCHS continues to support the ever-evolving needs of our community while maintaining our commitment to financial transparency, fiscal responsibility and providing high-quality services. During this past program year, BCHS has emerged out of the COVID-19 pandemic as still one of the strongest child development and family support agencies in Berkshire County.

A stylized, handwritten signature of the name 'Brett' in black ink.

Senior Team



Ann Beecham
Director of
Finance



Maggie Steele
Director of
Engagement Services



Melanie Moran
Director of
Human Resources



Donna Denning
Director of
Program Operations



Lorie Harrington
Director of
Health and Safety

Strong leadership and governance are critical to successfully providing quality services through Head Start programs.

The following are some of the important responsibilities of our Board of Directors and Policy Council:

- Adopt bylaws and amendments for the Board of Directors and Policy Council
- Review and approve major policies and procedures, including self-assessments and financial audits
- Monitor program performance
- Establish procedures and criteria for recruitment, selection and enrollment
- Review results and follow-up from federal monitoring

Board of Directors

Sue Doucette
President

Lori Kays
Vice President

Diane Johnson
Secretary

Amanda Bleier
Treasurer

Francine Germaine
Community At-Large

Judy Rush
Community At-Large

Cassandra Pugh
Community At-Large

Jason Godfrey
Community At-Large

Karen Cole
Community At-Large

Policy Council

Samantha Evans ML5

Ashley Wroblewski ML6

Alison Reiff ML6

Myah House Home Base 2

Genesis Wesley Home Base 2



Parent, Family and Community Engagement

Family engagement means working with—not doing to or for—our families. At the program level, family engagement involves parents’ engagement with their children and with staff as they work together toward the goals that families choose for themselves and their children. It also involves families and staff working toward goals to improve the program. Additionally, we build mutually respectful, strengths-based interactions with community members and local agencies to support our families as valued members of the community and support their progress toward achieving the goals they set for themselves and their children.

Currently, BCHS is providing childcare services to 318 students within the six BCHS locations. Students range in age from 2.9 to 5 years old.

BCHS STUDENT AGES:

a. 2 years old	52
b. 3 years old	107
c. 4 years old	91
d. 5 years and older	68
e. Total cumulative enrollment of children	318

Children that are currently enrolled in the BCHS program may have met more than one criterion to qualify for eligibility into the program. Below is a breakdown of the primary eligibility types based on our current enrollment.

PRIMARY TYPE OF ELIGIBILITY:

a. Income at or below 100% of federal poverty line	191
b. Public assistance such as TANF and SSI	58
c. Foster care	20
d. Homeless	9
e. Eligibility based on other type of need, but not counted in above	31

HEAD START STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

- Graduate high school
- Have better social skill, impulse control and approaches to learning
- Receive regular dental checkups and have healthy eating patterns

HEAD START STUDENTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO:

- Be in poor health
- Be out of school and unemployed
- Have child welfare encounters during their elementary school years



Success Stories

“Alivia” has been residing with her foster mother since she was 11 months old. Her foster mother was very involved at Berkshire County Head Start and attended many meetings with the family support service worker and family advocate. Through BCHS, behavioral guidance and support with resources were provided and Alivia received speech and mental health services. Alivia’s biological mom was granted visitation after she attended counseling and showed improvement in her mental health. She worked closely with Department of Children and Families and eventually improved so much that she was able to resume custody of Alivia.

Alivia’s mom now has a great relationship with the BCHS staff. She attended transition meetings and continues to engage in many supportive conversations. She and the staff use a communication home/school book daily to ensure everyone is on the same page with Alivia’s progress. The BCHS staff works with Alivia’s mom to utilize local resources to help her and her child as they move forward in life. Alivia’s mom is working very hard to build a strong relationship with her daughter and Alivia’s behaviors have greatly improved at school.



The “Williams” family moved to Pittsfield in August 2021, in the middle of the pandemic, from Ecuador. The family does not speak any English. The dad’s mother and father were already in America, so the family moved in with them. However, they have been pretty isolated since moving to Pittsfield. They don’t really know anyone, and both parents work for his dad’s business. Right now their world really revolves around work and family. The BCHS home visitor has been in contact with the family since October 2021, but due to COVID-19 restrictions and scheduling conflicts, she was not able to start regular visits with the family until February 2022.

Since starting visits with the family, their son has really blossomed, both in his personality and in terms of his comfort level with being out in public. He was very shy and unsure of his surroundings when they first started meeting. He looked to his parents for a lot of support and reassurance. Now when they meet, he appears excited to see the BCHS home visitor, and he dives right into new activities on his own. He is more open to exploring and is developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence that he didn’t have before.

Their son, now just over four years old, is still in the very early stages of learning English, but he learns and remembers new words each time they meet, and his parents are great about reinforcing those new words with him, even though their own English is also very limited. The home visitor is excited to transition him into the classroom at some point soon because his English skills will develop rapidly once he is in a daily program with other children. Overall, the BCHS staff are just so pleased with how well he has done with our lessons, and how trusting and supportive his family has been throughout this process. We’ve witnessed how challenging it can be for a family to start a new life in a new country.



Pittsfield Coordinated Family and Community Engagement

Berkshire County Head Start works with the Pittsfield Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) programs, which are locally based programs supported by funds provided by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). The grant promotes parent education, family engagement, child development and early literacy. Eighty-seven percent of parents who attend CFCE playgroups reported an increase in their knowledge of child development because of their participation in fiscal year 2018 programs. Additionally, 110 families who participated in Parent Educational opportunities from fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2018, showed a 27% increase in attendance at literacy activities in low-income housing community rooms at Dower Square and Berkshire Peaks.



- The Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grant is funded through the Department of Early Education and Care.
- CFCE offered 105 programs in fiscal year 2022 ranging from Fun on the Farm, Preschool Play and Learn, STEAM, Lunch and Learn, and Virtual Play and Learn groups.
- CFCE served 443 families and 531 children.
- Parent Education Workshops featured:
 - 2 Cooking Matters 4-part parent-child workshop; one focusing on healthy dinner and the other on healthy snacks.
 - 4 Individual parent education workshops focused on social emotional learning.
 - A total of 81 parents attended.
 - A total of 53 children completed ages and stages questionnaires (ASQs).
 - Aggregated results of the ASQs showed that 46% of children are below average in personal-social behavior. As a result, more dramatic play and cooperative learning activities have been added to playgroup curriculum to help children develop these skills.



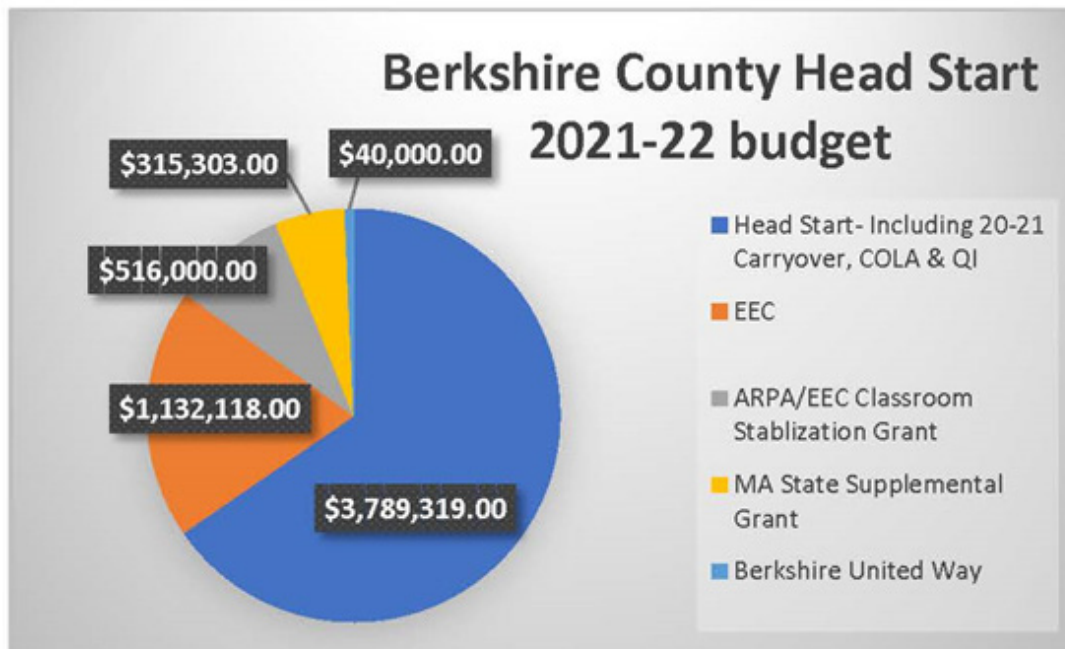
Financials

2021-2022 Training & Professional Development Dollars

Berkshire County Head Start is committed to ensuring its staff has access to high-quality training and professional development. Between 2021-2022, over \$75,000 was allocated to Berkshire County Head Start and other funding sources to provide staff opportunities to learn and grow. Some highlights include:

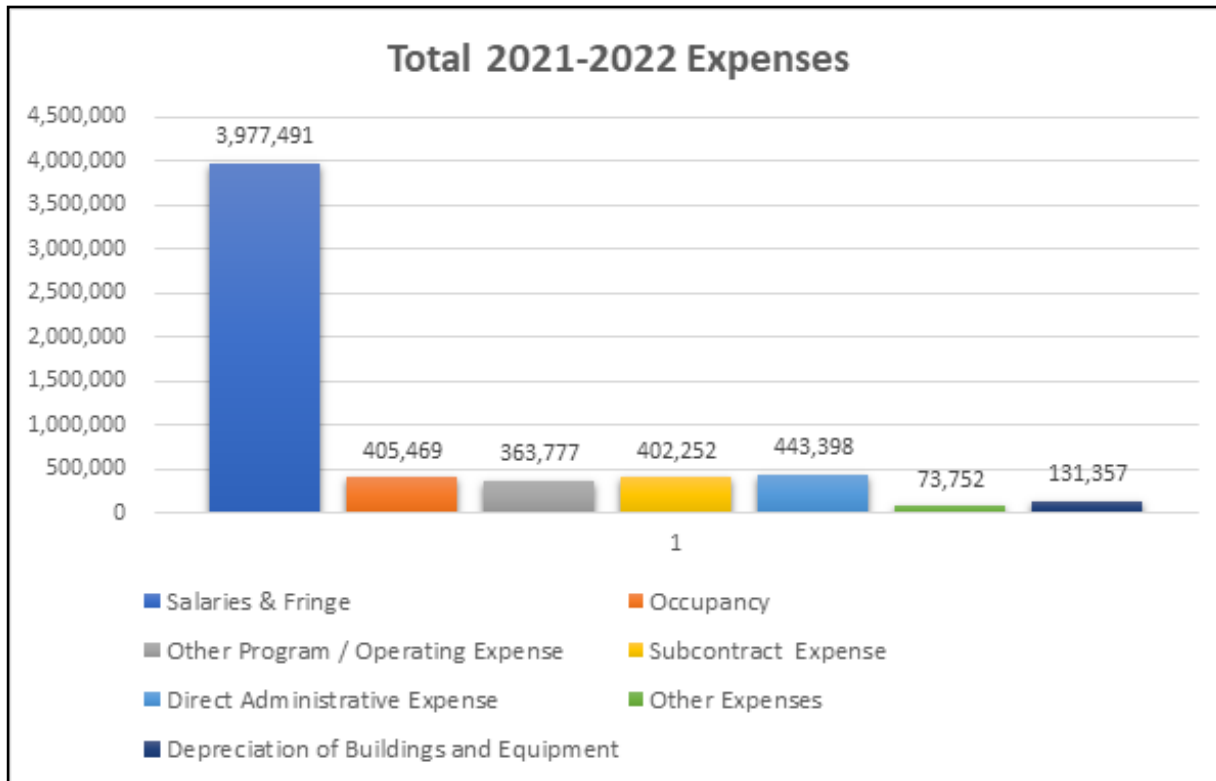
- All-staff diversity, equity and inclusion training
- Lakeshore Learning - Setting Up a High-Quality Learning Environment
- Required CPR/AED/First Aid training and certification
- 10-week leadership course
- DiSC Workplace profiles and 360 Degrees assessments for team-building
- My Head Start system training
- Certification and college-level coursework support

■ TOTAL	\$75,304.63
■ ADMIN	\$4,230.57
■ EEC	\$14,802.26
■ MA STATE SUPPLEMENTAL	\$3,200.00
■ HEAD START	\$50,579.64
■ COVID RELIEF ARPA	\$2,492.16



Funding Sources and Expenses

- Berkshire County Head Start’s base budget of 3.7 million, plus \$588,000 carried over from 2021-2022, cost of living increase and quality improvement.
- Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) based on enrollment in childcare/voucher program.
- American Rescue Plan Act funds received by EEC to be used to retain qualified early educators and other agency staff.
- Massachusetts State Supplemental Head Start grant to supplement services provided by family engagement and home visitor staff and health/clinical staff to children and families who have full-time childcare (not enrolled in Head Start) or enrolled in both childcare and Head Start programs (wrap-around).
- Berkshire United Way grant used to supplement specialized staff salary and benefits.



SALARIES & FRINGE: 85% goes to staff who provide direct services to children and families. 10% is for staff who provide oversight or support to classroom and family engagement staff. The remaining 5% is for executive leadership, finance, human resources, and administrative support.

OCCUPANCY: Berkshire Public Schools, Berkshire Hills Regional School District, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield, North Adams Public Schools and United Cerebral Palsy of Western Massachusetts partnered with Berkshire County Head Start by providing reduced or fully donated rental space and utilities for all of our centers. In 2021-2022, these partnerships provided the majority of our required local match – over \$850,000 in in-kind donations.

Prioritizing Staff Wellness and Mental Health

Berkshire County Head Start is proud to employ outstanding professional staff who serve students, families and community partners and who make a positive difference in many people's lives. BCHS counts on our employees to contribute to our continued growth and success and for that reason we take an intentional approach to prioritizing mental and physical health for our staff. We work hard to provide ongoing incentive compensation, recognition and competitive benefits to reward the skills, knowledge and creativity that each staff member brings to our mission-driven work. We work hard to create a working environment for staff that transmits a culture of wellness. This past year, we were able to further enhance our salary scale to align with market value compensation more closely, and provide expanded benefits such as a lifestyle spending account to support.



PHYSICAL:

- Athletic and exercise equipment
- Gym and health club memberships
- Spa services (nails, hair, skin care)
- Nutritional/weight-loss education
- Massage therapy

FINANCIAL:

- Financial advisor and planning services
- Household items (air conditioners, air purifiers, humidifiers, space heaters)
- Car repair and maintenance
- Utility bill payments (gas, oil, electric, phone, water/sewer)

EMOTIONAL/OTHER:

- Household assistance (housecleaning, yard maintenance, painting/updates)
- Eating out, movies, theater/music/dance events
- Babysitting/adult care services
- Diapers, baby food/formula, bottles, wipes, etc.

In addition, BCHS provided a flexible spending account for all staff-support costs related to copayments, dental services, vision care, medical equipment and medication.

We also implemented activities like the 10,000 Steps Challenge and Stress Less Challenge to help encourage staff to try new self-care strategies. Lastly, staff continue to have ongoing access to the Employee Assistance Program, which provides a broad range of services to support marriage and relationship issues, work-related mental health issues, legal financial challenges, stress and anxiety, alcohol and drug dependency and health and wellness concerns.



Partnerships

\$700,000 was received from the **City of Pittsfield American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** grant to implement the **REACH** (Resources to Empower & Advocate for Children & Households) program. The REACH program addresses the longstanding economic disparities for families adversely affected by racial inequity and generational poverty by providing access to affordable childcare, dedicated family support, community resources, and health/wellness partners.



Pittsfield Public Schools Taconic Early Learning Program

Berkshire County Head Start at Taconic High School

Berkshire County Head Start has entered into a partner relationship with Taconic High School to develop and manage a preschool center that provides learning opportunities to Taconic High School students and operates a model classroom for the Early Education and Care (EEC) program within Taconic High School. The center will serve as a training facility for Taconic EEC students, as well as serve the childcare needs of the public.

Berkshire United Way – \$40,000

Berkshire United Way (BUW) invests in quality early learning environments that are rooted in early childhood development, providing intensive parenting support, building social-emotional and literacy skills and assisting with early grade reading.

DONATIONS:

- Berkshire County Head Start received a \$10,000 donation from Greylock Federal Credit Union which supported children and families.
- The Crane fund contributed \$2,850 for widows and children.



Clinical Department

The intention of the clinical department is to address the needs of the children and families under the care of Berkshire County Head Start. The family and student support specialists are essential in collaborating with all departments to ensure services are offered and received by families in need of support for social emotional learning, positive discipline, mental health and other resources. The team becomes involved upon the request of the education team for student support. BCHS's student support referral is an intensive process that assesses the child's needs for developmental, emotional and behavioral support. The clinical team then initiates the process to address these concerns through joint family meetings, documentation, referrals and additional support for education and questions. The clinical team remains actively involved working with the children and families to continue to monitor and address concerns and ensure continuity of care.

- 318 newly enrolled children completed required screenings within 45 days for developmental, sensory and behavioral concerns since November 2021.
- 270 families received mental health services from Berkshire County Head Start.
- 23 children received individual mental health observations from a LCSW and/or LMHC.

Meet the Clinical Team

Katrina Bailey

Clinical Support Manager

Emma Demastrie

Student and Family Support Specialist

Reina Oduro

Student and Family Support Specialist

Sheila Toomey

Student and Family Support Specialist



Kindergarten Readiness

Berkshire County Head Start Fall/Spring 2021-2022 Child Outcomes

The Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children. Implementing and measuring progress toward school readiness goals helps programs individualize for each child and ensure that children know and can do what is needed to be ready for kindergarten.

FALL: Low enrollment

SPRING: Enrollment increased

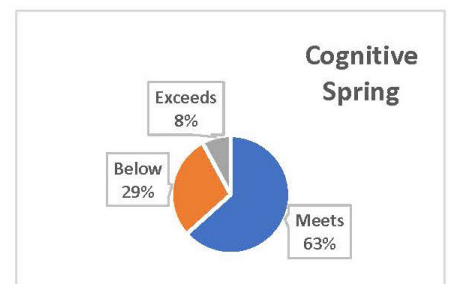
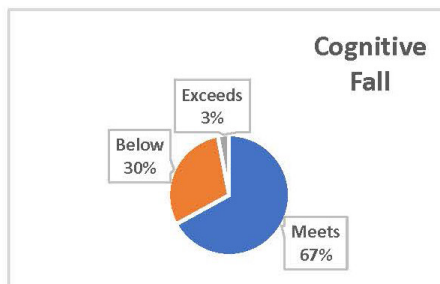
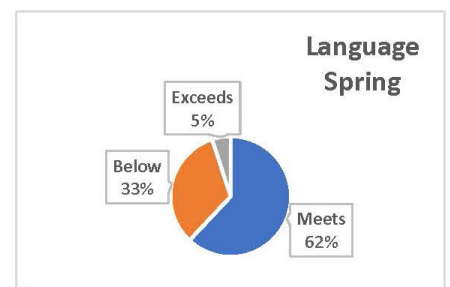
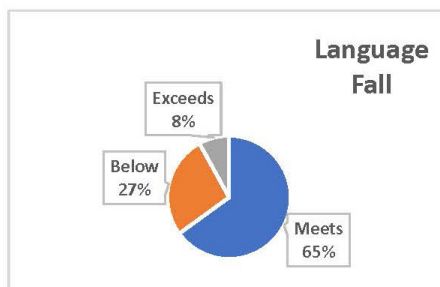
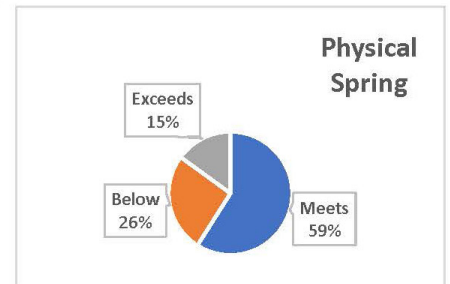
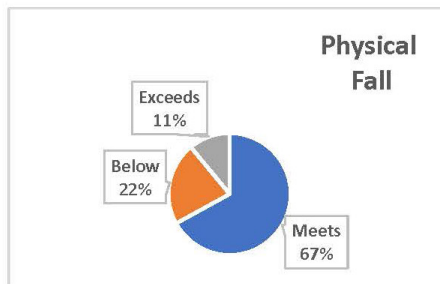
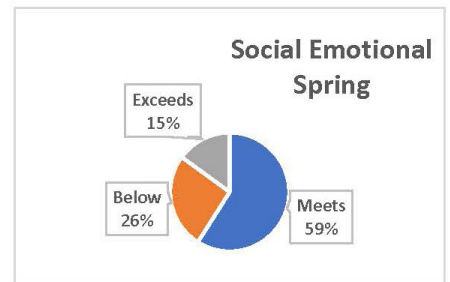
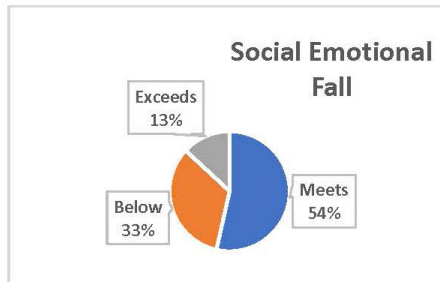
The data reflects children who were present for two or more checkpoints.

The Fall data does not represent the children who were not present, such as:

- Home Base 1 and 2
- No bussing on self-transport, but COVID happened and some families did remote learning.
- When COVID hit our staff, children, and families, we closed our classrooms to be cleaned for a week. This happened several times throughout the year.

For Spring data:

- Still dealing with COVID
- Numbers in our classrooms were stronger, but were still dealing with COVID and when staff called out, we closed the classrooms.



Health and Safety

As part of Berkshire County Head Start's comprehensive services, our program commits to ensuring that children and families have the support and services necessary to achieve health and wellness. Wellness helps to ensure school readiness and success for families and children well beyond preschool years. If children are healthy and well, they are better able to learn.

- 100% of children had health insurance.
- 100% of children have continuous, accessible health care.
- 83% of children have continuous accessible dental care.*
- 98% of children are up-to-date on immunizations.
- 21 children reported on PIR with a failed vision exam with us or with the child's PCP.
 - 11 of the 21 needed glasses (50%).
 - 8 of the 21 did not need glasses but remain under care with the eye doctor.
 - 90% of children that failed the vision exam and needed care received it.
 - Two children had to have appointments the family advocate was coordinating.

*Percentage is down due to the loss of a pediatric dental provider.

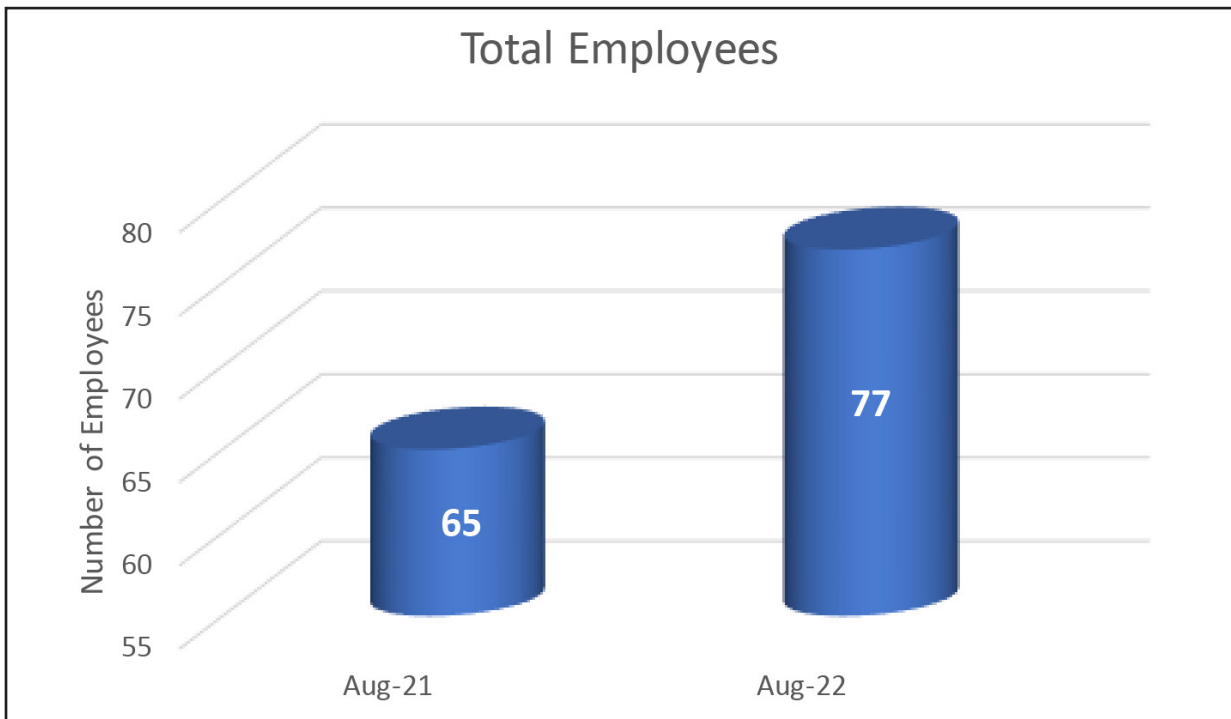


Human Resources

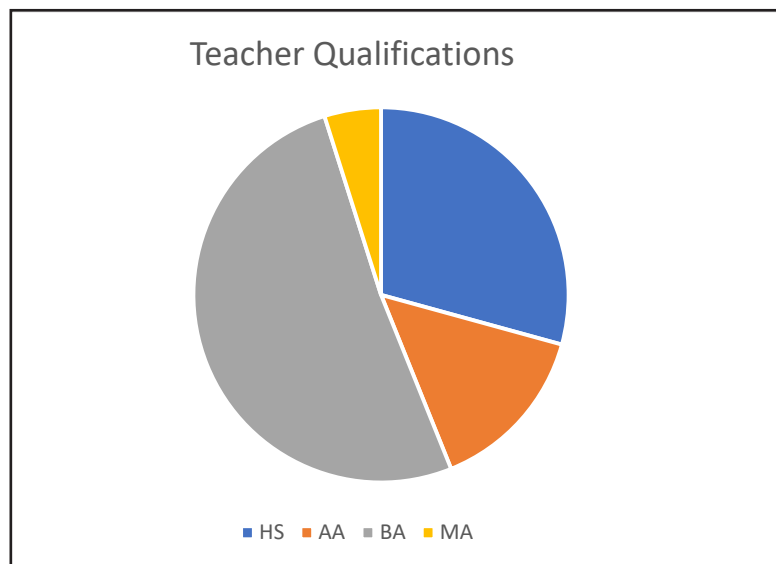
Professional development is a priority at BCHS as it ensures that knowledge and skills stay relevant in a field of changing needs. Retaining highly qualified staff is essential in supporting positive outcomes for the families that are served. A highly qualified early childhood educator is at the center of a high-quality early learning experience. The BCHS staff are trained to know how to create a dynamic, accountable learning environment for the children that are served.

Teaching Staff Credentials

Total Employees in August 2021 vs. August 2022

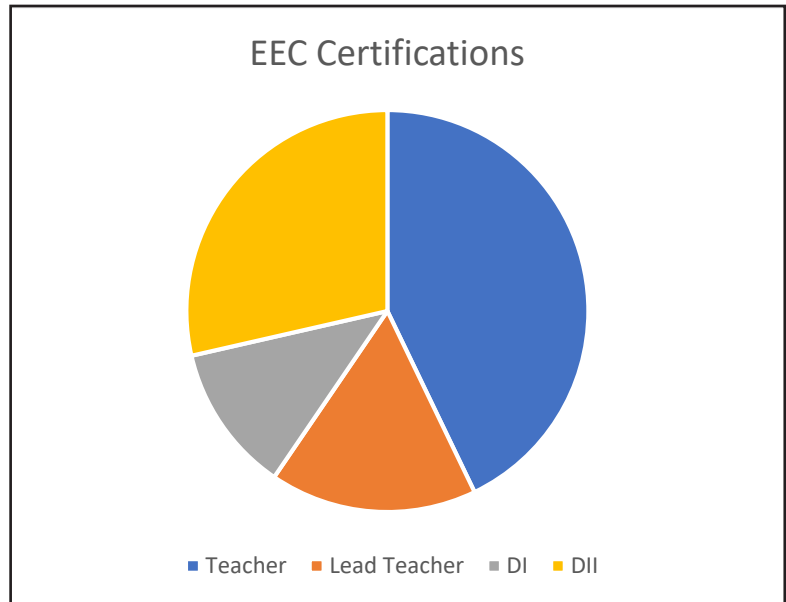


High School Diploma 12%
Associate of Arts 6%
Bachelor of Arts 21%
Master of Arts 2%



Teaching Certifications

Teacher	18%
Lead Teacher	7%
DI	5%
DII	12%



Employing Head Start Parents

At Berkshire County Head Start, we believe that parents are their child's first and most important teacher. We work hard to partner with families in support of their child's growth and development. We also believe in providing employment opportunities for caregivers who are interested in entering into the early childhood industry. During our fiscal year we hired five Berkshire County Head Start parents.

Of Our Employees
33%
Are Head Start Parents



What They're Saying

“He really has grown a lot in himself. He’s more confident in himself.”

- **Kellan Stimpson**
Parent of Head Start Student

“They teach everything that’s needed for a kid their age to move up.”

- **Akeem Joseph**
Parent of Head Start Student



“I have no idea how to put these in words, but it’s just the greatest school.”

- **Hanna**
Former Head Start Student

“I feel happy when I’m at school.”

- **McKenna**
Head Start Student

“It literally makes me cry when think about Head Start: the respect, the value, the communication, the interaction.”

- **Misha Patel**
Early Education &
Childhood Teacher, Head Start



“It just feels like we’re more than teachers here and that’s important to me.”

- **Brittany Greenholtz**
Education Site Manager, Head Start

“I’m very proud to be a Head Start parent and employee.”

- **Linda Ryan**
Family Advocate, Head Start



1 Meadow Lane • Pittsfield, MA 01201



berkhs.org/reach

Find us on:



Berkshire United Way

